

## AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES

February 9, 2006

**Members Present:** Al Byam (Co-Chair), Barbara Sutherland (Co-Chair), Doris Holden (Treasurer), Frank Lattuca, Ed Kaler (new member), Elsie Fetterman, Tom McAuley, Susan Whitbourne, Rosemary Kofler (Secretary)

**Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant), Marlene Barnett (Program Coordinator)

**Guests:** Marge Babb, Al Seewald (Town of Amherst Attorney)

### **Welcome:**

The Council on Aging meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM by Al Byam, Co-Chair. New member Ed Kaler was welcomed. Guests were welcomed and invited to discuss new issues. None were offered.

### **Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

Minutes of the December 8, 2005 meeting were reviewed and accepted as written.

## CONTINUING BUSINESS

**COA Secretary:** Nancy stated that Rosemary Kofler has agreed to be Secretary for the COA and asked members for a vote on that issue. COA members voted favorably.

**Staffing Changes:** Nancy addressed several staffing changes:

- Marlene this week became full time at the Senior Center
- Carol Hayward retired from a Experience Works position at the Nutrition Site. The Senior Center is looking for someone who meets the qualifications and income guidelines to replace her.

**Surgery:** Nancy announced that she will be out next week (perhaps longer) following surgery on her shoulder for a torn rotator cuff.

### **Budget Recommendations:**

The Town Manager, Select Board and Finance Committee will meet next week to determine the budget guidelines for FY 2007. Changes in the Senior Center budget include:

- increase for Karen since she will be getting a well-deserved reclassification to a higher level
- salary for Marlene since her salary at Public Works came from an enterprise fund which cannot be transferred to our department.

Barry, Town Manager, is retiring in March but he will see us through the budget preparation period.

The Select Board is currently focused on the revenue in the town Reserve Fund which has diminished down to about \$1 million (from several million dollars). The town is going through a difficult period and many departments may have to recommend staffing cuts. The Senior Center has had several years of budget cuts, we have only 4 staff members, the activities budget needs \$8000 but was cut to \$6500, we have no money for training and conferences, the office supply budget is \$1000 short, further cuts will probably mean cuts in staff and some services. Nancy asked for members to brainstorm on what things they think can be cut. Nancy may ask the Funding Committee to meet with her to discuss ideas or approach Town Meeting. Cuts continue year after year but the demand for services goes up.

## NEW BUSINESS

### **Frequency and Length of COA Meetings:**

Frank Lattuca suggested to Nancy in the past that the COA meet less frequently. (Currently the COA meets every month.) Nancy stated that a lot of time goes into preparing for each meeting and perhaps we could meet less often but for a longer period of time. She invited discussion.

- Ed Kaler objects to meeting every other month. He thinks monthly meetings are imperative to keep up on issues and in order to attend to proper business. He thinks 2 hours meetings are necessary.

- Susan Whitbourne suggests meeting every other month as long as subcommittees meet in between. In a smaller group the subcommittee members are able to accomplish more as individuals.
- Tom McAuley agrees with meeting every other month.
- Nancy is sensitive to the fact that some members are in the peak of their career and it is difficult for them to attend each meeting which means we may not have enough members for a quorum at each meeting.
- Elsie Fetterman suggested that with the budget coming up we may need to meet monthly to stay on top of things. Elsie went on to commend Maura Plante for her wonderful TV show on PBS about the work program for elders.
- Ed Kaler suggested that we continue this discussion and come to a consensus at the next COA meeting.

**The COA meeting was temporarily adjourned at 9:20 AM.**

## **SENIOR TRUST**

**The SENIOR TRUST meeting was formally opened at 9:20 AM.**

### **Treasurer's Report:**

Doris reported there was not a lot of action and that the balance of funds has gone up since December. There was a donation made to Hospice in memory of Hank Pierce.

### **Discussion of Formation of Senior Center Friends:**

Nancy referred members to their copy of a chart presenting the pros and cons of the Friends Group vs. the Community Foundation. She reviewed each item and strongly advised the Friends Group as the best way to go.

Alan Seewald, Town Attorney, Town Council, pointed out that the advantage of what we have now is that the COA has control of the funds, however that is not workable in Municipal Finance. The downside of the Friends Group is that it is controlled by a Board of Trustees or Board of Directors which is independent of the COA, thus we would no longer have control of the funds. No matter what we choose, the Senior Trust will have to be dissolved and a new entity formed. A complaint must be filed with the Supreme Judicial Court to dissolve the non-profit Trust before money can go to another non-profit group. The Attorney General's Public Charities Division has to look over the Trust, the remaining funds, and what we propose to do with the funds. It then informs the Supreme Court of its position. The Attorney General's assent is necessary. Alan thinks our plan to create another non-profit that is not controlled by the COA but rather as a Friends Group will be acceptable. This may take a long time since the Attorney General's office has thousands of similar requests throughout the state and limited staff.

The Friends Group would need a minimum of 5 Board of Director members. Nancy hopes Doris can be Treasurer. Alan stated we could set up the bylaws to say that the Treasurer of the COA would also be the Treasurer of the Friends Group.

Debbie Jankowski who works with Alan will be able to answer any questions regarding tax consequences or other technicalities. If need be she could come to the next meeting.

Frank said that although it will cost something to transfer funds to the Friends Group, the benefit will come back to us because it will open the door to fundraising.

Elsie asked what would happen to the \$10,000/year donation for nursing services. Nancy explained that the nurse has moved from the Senior Center to the Health Department. The COA unanimously voted at the April 2005 COA meeting to take the money from those donors out of the Trust and put it in a town account for the nurse's salary. Benefactors will now make out checks to that new account.

Nancy spoke with Shirley Lauder, former Treasurer for the town of Amherst and Treasurer of the Travel Club. Shirley has agreed to serve on the Board of the Friends Group. Nancy and Jean Haggerty have brainstormed for other people who might be willing to serve on the Board.

Al Byam asked for any further discussion. There was none.

Nancy thanked Tom, Susan, Al, Frank and Doris for meeting with her so often to work on changing the Trust.

**Vote on Establishment of Friends Group:**

A motion was made to move forward to establish the Friends Group. The COA members voted to approve the plan.

Al Byam proposed putting forth a plan of action to get things started. He asked if there was a model to follow. Alan Seewald said there are a Friends of Leisure Services and a Friends of Jones Library. Doris will look into contacting someone from the Friends of Jones Library. Alan suggested looking at their bylaws.

Maura will check to see if the Northampton Senior Center has a Friends Group.

Nancy suggested formation of a Subcommittee. Al, Susan, Frank, Tom, Doris and Nancy agreed to work on such a committee and begin researching information. They will meet in 2 weeks, on February 23 at 10 AM. They will make a presentation at the next COA meeting on March 9, 2006.

**Adjournment:**

The Senior Trust meeting was adjourned at 9:55 AM.

**The COA meeting reconvened at 9:55 AM**

**Nursing Center (continued):**

The Health Department informed the nurse that they would like the Clinic space to be on their floor for supervisory purposes. The nurse is considering that proposal.

**Senior Parking:**

The Senior Center received a letter from an elder advocating that seniors should be eligible to park in the Parking Garage at a reduced rate. The current fee is \$.50/hour. Perhaps the COA would like to write a letter to parking enforcement addressing this issue. Maura knows someone who is working on reduced parking fees for elders. She will contact her and invite her to our next meeting.

**Senior Center Club Checking Account Transition:**

Nancy spoke on how she is trying to prepare for the money to go from the Trust into the Friends Group. In order that routine Senior Center activities can continue to happen (with a minimum of financial requests to the Friends group), and in anticipation of the possibility that the Senior Center Club checking account has to be eliminated, two changes are being made:

**1) Wellness Grants:** The Trust has always helped those in need to attend the Clinics under a "Wellness Grant". Nancy writes them a check from the Senior Center checking account which they then give to the clinician. Nancy instead recommends putting the necessary money into a gift account in the Town and having the clinician bill that account monthly. That account would be replenished once a year. At the next COA meeting Nancy will ask COA members to vote to take money out of the Trust and put it into a Wellness Grant fund.

**2) Food:** We now have established charge accounts at Stop and Shop and Atkins. The stores bill us and we submit that to the Center Activities Account.

The *Senior Spirit* newsletter financing presents problems because it must be mailed under 501C3 to get a reduced rate. Nancy can't establish a gift account under the Town, with the monies raised by ads and donations, and use that to pay the printing and postage costs and still get the benefits of mailing it out at the 501C-3 non-profit rate. Mailing it out under the Town's bulk rate is hundreds of dollars more expensive.

**SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATES**

**Transportation:** Al reports that the bus and van service will not be disrupted. The contract has been extended until June 30. The budget for FY '07 was received. It asks for another reduction. There is a new proposal before

the Legislature for a new funding mechanism which would provide a dedicated source of funding, forward funding, and an increase in funding. Right now funding is still at FY '01 levels.

#### **STAFF REPORTS**

**Meals on Wheels Policy Change:** Maura passed out the Meals on Wheels Handbook. She is in the process of making changes. She would like feedback on the best way to handle situations if a recipient is not at home. She gives guidelines to the delivery people on how to assess if the person needs help or is ill and is unable to answer the door and what to do if that is the case. But if all is well and no one is at home it is not safe to leave food because it may spoil. Should we ask residents to leave a note on the door saying they will not be at home when their meal is delivered? Will that alert strangers that the house is empty? Maura is asking drivers and COA members for suggestions.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Elsie requested to be on the next COA agenda in order to talk about the White House Council on Aging Conference.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 AM.

**The next meeting will be Thursday, March 9, 2006, 9:00-10:30 AM**

Respectfully submitted,  
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary, COA